AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-3 (Cancelled)

Claim 4. (Previously Amended) The method according to claim 31, wherein said treatment solution further contains urea, an imidazole ring-containing compound or an indole ring-containing compound.

Claims 5-10 (Cancelled)

Claim 11. (Currently Amended) A method for ~~treating~~ detecting a hepatitis C virus (HCV) or hepatitis B virus (HBV) ~~containing~~ in a sample ~~to obtain~~ by obtaining a sample suitable for detection of virus by a probe antibody, comprising the steps of:

(1) treating a virus-containing sample with a treatment solution containing (a) an anionic surfactant and (b) an agent selected from the group consisting of an amphoteric surfactant, a nonionic surfactant and a protein denaturant; ~~and~~ wherein the denaturing effect of the anionic surfactant (a) to the probe antibody is reduced by the agent (b);

(2) obtaining a treated virus-containing sample in which the virus particle is disrupted, the virus antigen is exposed or released; and antibodies against the virus antigen, if present in the sample, that interfere with a detection reaction, are inactivated~~;~~; and

(3) subjecting the sample ~~and which sample is readily subjected~~ to an immunoassay using ~~a~~ the probe antibody in the presence of treatment solution.

Claim 12. (Withdrawn) A virus assay method, characterized by using a sample treating method according to any one of claims 1 to 10 and reacting it with a

probe which specifically recognizes a virus antigen, for detection or quantitation of the presence of the virus antigen.

Claims 13-33 (Cancelled)

Claim 34. (Previously Amended) The method according to claim 32, wherein said treatment solution further contains urea.

Claims 35 and 36 (Cancelled)

Claim 37. (Currently Amended) A method for ~~treating~~ detecting a hepatitis C virus (HCV) ~~and~~ or a hepatitis B virus (HBV) ~~containing~~ in a sample ~~to obtain~~ by obtaining a sample suitable for detection of virus by a probe antibody, comprising the steps of:

(1) treating a virus-containing sample with a treatment solution comprising (a) an anionic surfactant, (b) an amphoteric surfactant, and (c) an agent selected from the group consisting of a nonionic surfactant and a protein denaturant; ~~and~~ wherein the denaturing effect of the anionic surfactant (a) to the probe antibody is reduced by the amphoteric surfactant (b) and the agent (c);

(2) obtaining a virus-containing sample in which the virus particle is disrupted, the viral antigen is exposed or released; and antibodies against the viral antigen, if present in the sample, that interfere with a detection reaction, are inactivated; and

(3) ~~which~~ subjecting the sample ~~is readily subjected~~ to an immunoassay using a probe antibody in the presence of treatment solution.

Claim 38. (Previously Amended) The method according to claim 33, wherein said treatment solution further contains urea.

Claims 39 and 40 (Cancelled)

Claim 41. (Currently Amended) A method for ~~treating~~ detecting a hepatitis C virus (HCV) ~~and~~ or hepatitis B virus (HBV) ~~containing~~ in a sample ~~to obtain~~ by obtaining a sample suitable for detection of virus by a probe, comprising the steps of:

(1) treating a virus-containing sample with a treatment solution comprising (a) an anionic surfactant, (b) an amphoteric surfactant, (c) a nonionic surfactant and (d) a protein denaturant; ~~and~~ wherein the denaturing effect of the anionic surfactant (a) to the probe antibody is reduced by the amphoteric surfactant (b), the nonionic surfactant (c) and the protein denaturant (d);

(2) obtaining a virus-containing sample in which the virus particle is disrupted, the viral antigen is exposed or released; and antibodies against the viral antigen, if present in the sample, that interfere with a detection reaction, are inactivated; and

(3) ~~which~~ subjecting the sample ~~is readily subjected~~ to an immunoassay using a probe antibody in the presence of treatment solution.